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MISSION STATEMENT

It is the mission of the District Court of Maryland to provide equal and exact justice for all who are involved in litigation before the Court.

It is the sworn obligation of the judges of the Court to ensure that every case tried herein is adjudicated expeditiously, courteously, and according to law, and with the fullest protection for the rights of all who are involved, for the most extraordinary aspect of the judiciary in a free society is that even while exercising the vast authority entrusted to them, judges remain the servants, and not the masters, of those on whom they sit in judgment.

It is the function of the nonjudicial employees of the District Court to facilitate the hearing and processing of all cases within the Court's jurisdiction, and to deal fairly, courteously, and patiently with all with whom they come into contact, without regard to age, race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, or political or social standing.

It was to ensure the fulfillment of these ideas that this Court was founded, and its commitment to them must always remain unwavering and unyielding.

CHIEF JUDGE ROBERT M. BELL

It is with great pride that I present this 30-year retrospective detailing the accomplishments of the District Court of Maryland. Most citizens, at some time in their lives, will visit the District Court for some purpose—to obtain records, for a traffic matter, to file or respond to a small claim, or perhaps to resolve a landlord/tenant dispute.

The District Court of Maryland was created by a Constitutional Amendment in 1971. In just a few short decades, it has established itself as a model system of justice nationally. With a network of locations that make the system accessible to all Marylanders, it has, among many accomplishments, achieved high standards for judges, provided quality service, and made effective use of technology to ensure speedy case resolution.

I commend the Honorable James N. Vaughan, Chief Judge of the District Court, for his commitment to the mission of the Maryland Judiciary, and the Honorable Martha F. Rasin, for the leadership she brought to the position of Chief Judge from 1996 to 2001. I also acknowledge and honor the legacy of the Honorable Robert F. Sweeney, the District Court's first Chief Judge, whose great vision, dedication and uncompromising pursuit of the perfect court ensured the preeminence the District Court enjoys today.

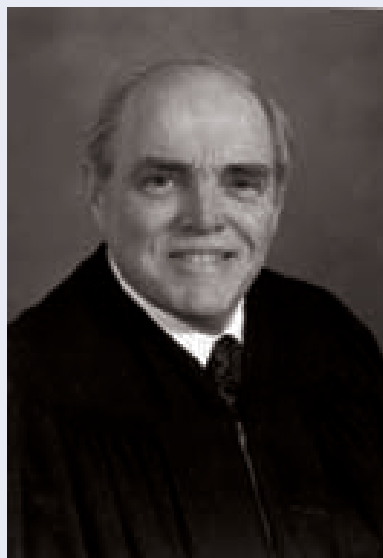
Robert M. Bell
Chief Judge, Court of Appeals



CHIEF JUDGE JAMES N. VAUGHAN

Dear Colleagues:

It is an honor for me to present this report of the District Court's accomplishments, both recent and historical. As we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the District Court, we take a look back to our beginnings and reminisce about the way things used to be. Yet, in doing so, we remember that July 5, 1971, the first day of business for the new statewide court of lower jurisdiction in Maryland, was a momentous change from the way the justice system worked in the preceding years. As we took that big step, we knew the new system promised a much more fair, honest and uniform system of justice.



Through its first three decades, the District Court has quickly established itself as a progressive, productive and forward-thinking system. In this report, you will learn about the continuous changes that have gone on in order to maintain the high quality of service to the citizens of Maryland. The Honorable Robert F. Sweeney steered the District Court through its formative years, until he retired in 1996. Then, the Honorable Martha F. Rasin brought the District Court into this new era. Her many contributions included improving service to the public and achieving efficiencies through technology while always remaining focused on the individuals whose lives are affected by the decisions of the Court. I dedicate this report in honor of the high standards she set for both judicial and non-judicial employees in achieving the mission of the Court.

This past year has also brought other changes to the Court – the beginning of consolidation of many functions performed by Headquarters staff and the challenge of keeping pace with a greater quantity of cases, cases that are more complex and require more interaction with other agencies and courts. There is also a need to keep pace with the technology necessary to respond to these demands. I look forward to working with each of you as I take on the responsibilities of my new position. Together we will meet these challenges.

I thank you for your interest and your support of the District Court of Maryland.

James N. Vaughan
Chief Judge, District Court of Maryland

CHIEF CLERK PATRICIA H. PLATT

A Message from the Chief Clerk:

The year 2001 has been an exciting one as the District Court celebrated its 30th Anniversary. Within the pages of this report are snapshots of some of the wonderful things that have been going on in the Court, including the creation of new programs to enhance service to the public and the work performed by staff everyday to process the more than two million cases filed with the District Court this year alone.

These snapshots are presented against the backdrop of the historical events of the past 30 years. The Court's new digital recording system is just one example. The system, which will be placed in all District Court locations over the next 18 months, was purchased after a lengthy research and procurement process. It represents a major technological advance for the District Court and maintains a feature unique to Maryland—having a statewide court of record for cases of limited jurisdiction that achieves a high level of case processing. This report looks at the new digital recording system in the context of the various technologies used through the past 30 years to record proceedings. Even as we install this state-of-the-art system, we can only wonder, "What will the next 30 years bring?" Whatever it is, the District Court of Maryland will be one of the leaders.

This overview of the District Court is the product of much hard work. I want to thank the Administrative Judges, Clerks, and Commissioners for their input, and all of the District Court's 1,300 employees for their commitment to excellence. I hope you will enjoy reading about the exciting projects within the District Court and our goals for the future.

Patricia H. Platt

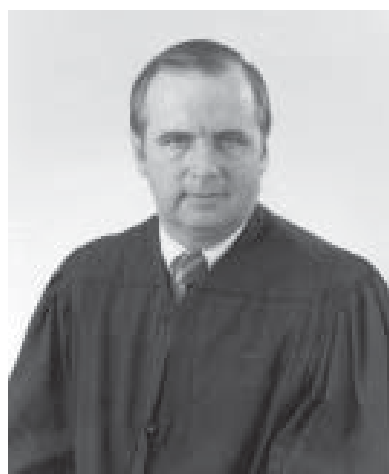
Chief Clerk, District Court of Maryland



1971 JUDICIARY ANNUAL REPORT

“Maryland’s present system of courts of limited jurisdiction, which consists of Trial Magistrates, People’s and Municipal Court Judges, will be replaced on July 5, 1971 by a full-time District Court that was approved by public referendum in the general election held November 3, 1970 ...

“The new Court will be staffed by seventy-eight full-time judges who must be members of the Maryland Bar, not less than thirty years old and have practiced law for at least five years. They will have state-wide jurisdiction and will sit throughout the twelve districts that will comprise the Court. They will be appointed by the Governor, subject to Senatorial confirmation, to ten-year terms of office. No election to office is provided by the legislation creating the Court. Under the provisions of the District Court Act, all



Deputy Attorney General Robert F. Sweeney was the first Chief Judge of the District Court of Maryland.



District Courthouses have come a long way since this early Howard County courtroom.

WELCOME TO THE DISTRICT

The District Court proudly celebrated 30 years of outstanding service to the people of Maryland this year.

When the Court began operating on July 5, 1971, it replaced a confusing system of local magistrates, justices of the peace, and People’s Courts, each with its own rules and procedures. Under the old system, trials were held in homes, basements of retail establishments, or other unsuitable places. Often, these courts were staffed by untrained magistrates or justices of the peace. As a result, the quality of justice varied from county to county and failed to provide the citizens of Maryland a judicial system that deserved their full trust and confidence.

Thanks to a constitutional amendment passed in 1969 and ratified in the general election of 1970, the District Court was created in 1971. This is a statewide court with 34 locations in 12 districts throughout the state.

The Court’s headquarters are located in Annapolis. Its mission—providing equal and exact justice for all who are involved in litigation before the Court—is ensured by a staff of more than 1,300,

including 107 judges. District Court judges must be members of the Maryland Bar, at least 30 years old, and must reside in the county in which they sit. Most importantly, each must meet high standards of professionalism and personal integrity. Judges are selected by the Governor and confirmed by the state Senate.

The District Court, one of just two general trial courts in Maryland, has seen tremendous growth since its inception in 1971. In its first year, the

Court processed just under 800,000 cases; today, more than two

COURT OF MARYLAND

million cases are filed annually. Those cases cover a wide variety of issues, including:

- landlord-tenant disputes;
- replevin claims, which seek the recovery of goods or property;
- a wide variety of motor vehicle violations, ranging from parking tickets to driving under the influence of alcohol;
- civil lawsuits for up to \$25,000;
- criminal misdemeanors and certain felonies; and
- bail and preliminary hearings for any crime charged in Maryland.

The District Court does not conduct jury trials. In those instances where a party to a case is entitled to and requests a jury trial, the case is moved to a circuit court. As a result, civil claims for between \$2,500 and \$25,000, and certain criminal offenses can be heard in either District Court or circuit court.

With such broad jurisdiction, it should come as no surprise that most Maryland citizens with court business visit the District Court. Many individuals choose to represent themselves, especially in civil disputes over small amounts. In that sense, the District Court is truly a people's court.

The Court and its employees are proud to continue the tradition of providing excellent service to the people of Maryland.



The District Court in Kent County has been located in this beautiful Chestertown facility since the court's creation in 1971.



District Court staff celebrate at the 30th Anniversary Bull Roast.

existing full-time People's and Municipal Court judges will automatically become District Court judges.

"... Deputy Attorney General Robert F. Sweeney was appointed Chief Judge of the District Court and took office May 5, 1971, as provided in the District Court Act, so as to enable him to begin the arduous task of organizing the new system. It is anticipated that the District Court, due to its increased civil jurisdiction, when compared to the present courts of limited jurisdiction, will be able to relieve some of the load of the circuit courts."

1971

July 5—The District Court begins operations under the leadership of Chief Judge Robert F. Sweeney and Chief Clerk Margaret L. Kostritsky.

1972

July—During its first year of operation, the District Court processes a total of 778,718 cases. 438,793 involved motor vehicle violations, 112,923 were criminal actions, and 227,002 were civil actions.

August—The Honorable Robert C. Murphy is named the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals.

1973

The revenues received by the District Court total \$14,704,307. The expenses required to operate the Court total just \$10,505,873.

We strive to provide responsive services to citizens by enhancing accessibility to courthouses, information, and resources.

2001 HIGHLIGHTS

- The District Court continued its efforts to make people aware of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), or mediation. In ADR, a trained neutral person—a mediator—helps individuals communicate with one another and, if possible, resolve their disagreements. In addition to beginning pilot programs in several districts and counties, the Court's ADR Subcommittee held a March 2001 conference, "Developing Partnerships Between Community Resources and District Court for Mediation of Civil Cases." The conference brought together mediators, community mediation centers, clerks, and judges. On July 1, 2001, the District Court's ADR subcommittee became the permanent ADR Initiative.
- The District Court has undertaken a major "Excellence in Public Service" training initiative to build on its public service foundation and enhance service to Maryland citizens. A statewide committee is designing training and tools to ensure that all staff have the understanding and skills to provide services in a customer-oriented way. Subcommittees are working to design training for both staff and supervisors using a peer training model.
 - The General Assembly passed legislation creating law clerk positions in each district. The clerks have been used for research and have assisted in ADR.
 - Committees are working to review all District Court forms, brochures and notices to assure user-friendliness, visual appeal and readability, gender-neutral language, and consistency.
 - More than 230 District Court commissioners held 184,937 Initial Appearance Hearings for individuals charged with crimes. In addition, commissioners issued 65,712 charging documents and 57,557 bonds.



Members of an Excellence in Public Service subcommittee discuss the contents of a new curriculum guide for supervisors.

TO THE PUBLIC

2002 GOALS

- Collaborate in the redesign of the Judiciary website and develop content specific to the District Court that will best meet users' needs.
- Complete revisions to brochures to make them more user friendly, and create brochures to explain expungement, how to file a small claim, and how to collect money owed.
- Revise all Court notices regarding civil issues to make them easier to read and understand.
- Complete the "Excellence in Public Service" training of staff and supervisors and create individualized unit plans for follow-up.
- Produce a District Court video for use in the public areas of courthouses.
- Promote the image and accomplishments of the District Court in statewide newspapers and nationwide trade and professional journals.
- Complete an analysis of each location and recommend changes that can be made to come as close as possible to achieving an "ideal" facility in terms of public space.
- Expand the number of regional ADR Coordinators across the state. ADR Coordinators will develop resources, assist the courts, evaluate programs, offer suggestions for improvements, and initiate new programs.
- Increase public awareness of mediation with the production of a 10-minute informational video.



The District Court is committed to ensuring citizens' access to information.

1973 JUDICIARY ANNUAL REPORT

"The first two years of operation of the District Court have had an impact in reducing the civil law caseload of the circuit courts when compared to the courts of limited jurisdiction that existed prior to the establishment of the District Court."

1977

January—The District Court begins using a new computerized system for processing motor-vehicle citations. Under the new system, a motorist can choose to plead guilty and mail in the fine. Once the fine is received, the new system notes the fine, alerts the Motor Vehicle Administration that the driver has pled guilty, and closes the case. If the fine is not received, the computer automatically schedules a trial date.

November—The Maryland Automated Traffic System (MATS) is implemented to increase the efficiency of tracking and scheduling traffic citation cases by computer.

1979 JUDICIARY ANNUAL REPORT

“When the District Court was established in 1971, Maryland was almost unique among the states in abolishing all part-time and local courts of limited jurisdiction and creating in their stead a single statewide court, centrally administered, and staffed by judges who were required to be experienced in the practice of law and to devote their full time to judicial duties. Over the past eight years, however, more and more states have begun to emulate the Maryland model, and it is apparent that Maryland’s 1971 innovation is now the wave of the future.”

NOW HEAR THIS

How far has the District Court come since it began operating on July 5, 1971? Technologically, it has advanced by leaps and bounds. An interesting example of the Court’s use of technology is the evolution of its recording system.

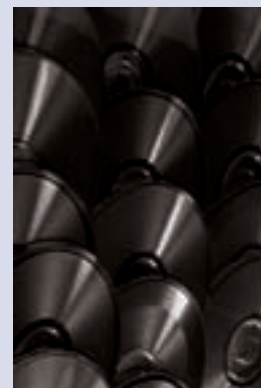
The District Court of Maryland is a statewide court of record, which means that proceedings are recorded, with recordings available to individuals who request them. When the law provides that an appeal of a District Court case is “on the record,” the Court produces an official transcript to send to the appellate court.

When the Court began operations in 1971, proceedings were recorded by the now-extinct “Edison Voice Writer.” Trials were recorded on red, floppy records.

The District Court upgraded its recording equipment in the late 1970s, when large reel-to-reel systems were installed in all the courtrooms. The new system was an improvement in quality, but it was difficult to determine whether there was room left on a reel for an entire proceeding, especially if a hearing or trial ran longer than expected. More than once, a courtroom clerk was confronted with a reel running out before the case was over.

The Court took a leap forward in the early 1990s with the introduction of digital audio tapes, the system widely in use today. The recording equipment was more compact than the reel-to-reel system, and changing tapes was much less disruptive. The quality of the recordings continued to be an issue, however, a problem that the Court’s new digital recording system should eliminate.

The new system converts analog audio into digital audio files. The digital files work much like a music compact disc, in that finding and playing back particular parts of the digital recording is much easier than with an analog tape recording. Court records of any proceeding can be duplicated on a data CD that can be played back on a Windows-based PC.

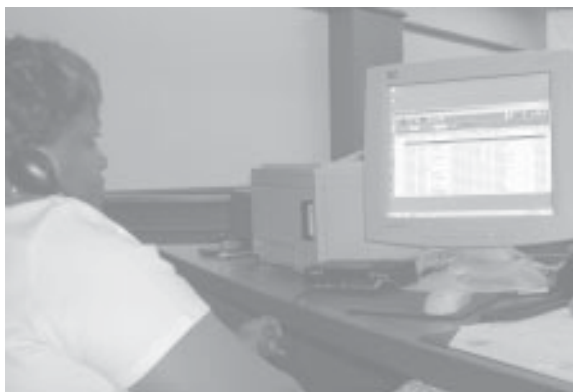


EFFICIENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

We gain the trust and confidence of the public by using public resources wisely, through efficient and effective operations, and by demonstrating accountability.

2001 HIGHLIGHTS

- The Court implemented a pilot program in Calvert County that allows commissioners to hold initial appearance hearings by video.
- The Court installed software in commissioners' stations in Baltimore City that allows commissioners to schedule court dates that coincide with police officers' duty schedules.
- As a result of new laws on alcohol-related traffic violations, the Chief Judge revised the Maryland Uniform Complaint and Citation for traffic violations. In doing so, the Court collaborated with the Motor Vehicle Administration, the Office of Administrative Hearings, and law enforcement agencies to ensure that adequate supplies of the new citations were available to officers and that all involved in the change were trained prior to September 30.
- The Court contracted with a vendor to provide digital courtroom recording. The system will allow digital recordings of Court proceedings to be integrated with data records. In addition, the new system will make it much easier to play, archive, transport, and transcribe audio records.



Courtroom clerks can tag and index court proceedings with the new digital recording system right from their desktops.

1980

The District Court and the circuit courts are granted concurrent jurisdiction with respect to protection from domestic violence. The new law allows a household member to file a petition alleging abuse against another household member. The courts are empowered to take various actions to protect the affected household member from abuse, including an order to refrain from abuse, an order to vacate the family home for a specified period, the awarding of temporary custody of a minor, and an order directing household members to undergo counseling.

1980

The District Court is given exclusive original jurisdiction over any violation of the bad check laws.

A new law calls for the District Court to prescribe a uniform statewide form for traffic citations.

1981

The Maryland District Court Criminal System is implemented to increase the efficiency of tracking and scheduling criminal cases through computerization.

The Court's jurisdiction is broadened to include all theft cases, and the legislature increases the Court's civil jurisdiction from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

1982

Legislation is enacted extending classified service status to all non-judicial employees of the Court.

1983

A new law establishes the breath test as the primary determinant test for driving while intoxicated or driving under the influence of alcohol.

- The Court focused attention and energy on the Information Technology planning process. This year's focus was on creating a framework for the annual plan and then documenting and prioritizing IT projects.
- The District Court installed videoconferencing equipment in Baltimore City and the Court's headquarters in Annapolis. The technology allows individuals to meet via a video camera and television monitor at each location. Videoconferencing has great potential to improve access to training, increase opportunities to meet with individuals from other parts of the state, and realize savings in travel time and costs.
- The District Court, with the support of Judicial Information Systems, began installing a new e-mail system to promote effective communication between Court employees. As of June 30, 2001, approximately 150 District Court employees were added or converted to the new system.

SETTING A NEW STANDARD

A study conducted in 1998 revealed that the public believes that cases take too long to come to closure in the court system.

The Maryland Judiciary is taking steps to mitigate the problem. The District Court, pursuant to a directive from Chief Judge Bell, recently instituted a Caseflow Management initiative. The Court is now actively engaged in formulating a process that will allow cases to move through the courts efficiently and effectively, while maintaining the quality of justice essential to a court system. The initiative is among the most ambitious undertakings in the Court's existence.

The Court set time standards for cases in all courts, and then analyzed more than 15,000 cases statewide to determine the best way to meet those standards. The analysis pointed to the need to involve other organizations and agencies in the caseflow management process. The District Court's Caseflow Management Conference in November brought together a variety of stakeholders, including public defenders, State's Attorneys, and agencies such as the Motor Vehicle Administration and Parole and Probation. The Court's leadership has followed up the statewide conference with local meetings, in an effort to develop specialized caseflow management plans for each district.

ACCOUNTABILITY

2002 GOALS

- Implement the local plans for improved caseflow management.
- Continue to improve the information technology planning and budgeting process to ensure accurate and reliable planning, research and development, and design of best practices.
- Develop an e-filing pilot project in landlord-tenant cases in Prince George's County.
- Install digital recording equipment in approximately 20 Court locations.
- Use the results of the statewide statistical study to define time standards for case disposition and make other recommendations that will reduce the processing time, and possibly the cost, of cases.
- Automate traffic citation processing to include an imaging system.
- Install videoconferencing equipment for training and meeting purposes in two more locations.



Videoconferencing equipment offers increased opportunities for holding statewide training without the travel costs.

1987

The legislature passes a law giving the District Court concurrent jurisdiction with the circuit courts over credit card offenses and bad check cases.

The jurisdictional amount of small claims and landlord/tenant actions is increased to \$2,500.

1988

Several bills are enacted to reduce alcohol- or drug-related driving offenses.

The revenues received by the District Court total \$47,731,000. The expenses required to operate the Court are \$46,797,000.

1989

A statewide computerized data and barcoding system is placed in 90 District Court locations in the state, and 50 commissioners' stations. The system allows a commissioner to create a case number and corresponding bar code that will follow the defendant through the criminal court system. The system also allows commissioners to see any new charges that have been filed.

1991

April 10—Edward L. Utz is appointed Chief Clerk of the District Court.

1992

Jurisdiction over civil cases rises from \$10,000 to \$20,000, allowing people the option of having their cases heard in District Court and avoiding a one- to four-year backlog in the circuit court.

We value the contributions, dedication, and diversity of District Court employees, and support their growth and development.

2001 HIGHLIGHTS

- District Court judges regularly attend workshops and other continuing legal education programs to ensure that they continue to provide quality service to the public. The semiannual Judicial Education Conferences covered a variety of topics, including:
 - New case law resulting from appeals;
 - New legislation concerning driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs;
 - Changes to laws governing motor vehicle violations.
- The Court provided training to District Court commissioners to help them deal with domestic violence situations. Commissioners were involved with more than 19,000 felony domestic violence charges.
- The District Court held a Supervisors' Workshop in April. The workshop offered two days of training in a variety of topics, including performance evaluation, effective writing and speaking skills, and time and stress management. Almost 150 employees took part in the workshop.
- More than 100 new District Court employees received formal orientation. Employees also attended a variety of classes in customer service, mediation awareness, and communication. The Human Resources department provided more than 1,700 units of training through 71 classes.
- In addition, the Human Resources department coordinated

AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

training opportunities with outside commercial and educational organizations for 85 employees.

- The District Court trained 140 employees on using Lotus Notes e-mail and Court systems such as Barcoding and specialized software used by commissioners and courtroom clerks.

2002 GOALS

- Add two courses focusing on the court’s mainframe computer system. One course is intended for employees working on civil cases, while the other deals with those who work on criminal/traffic cases.
- Offer two additional mainframe courses.
- Increase affiliations with regional and national professional organizations and associations.
- Participate in collaborative efforts within and outside the Judiciary to promote public trust and confidence.



Employee training focuses on a variety of topics, from improving communication skills to learning new computer programs.

1995

The automation of courtroom clerical functions is fully implemented to increase courtroom efficiency and reduce human error.

The court’s cash registers are linked to the mainframe system, so that as someone pays a traffic citation, the citation is registered as paid in the MATS and MVA is automatically notified.

1996

September 17—The Honorable Robert F. Sweeney retires as the Chief Judge of the District Court.

The Honorable Martha F. Rasin is sworn in as the Chief Judge of the District Court.

October 23—The Honorable Robert F. Bell is named the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals.

1997

June—Patricia H. Platt is appointed Chief Clerk of the District Court.

1998

July—Commissioner's

Assistant software is introduced to ease the process of filing criminal charges.

The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system is installed. This computerized telephone system allows a caller to use a touch-tone phone to get information about or pay a traffic citation.

November 3—Maryland voters ratify an amendment to the state constitution that limits the right to trial by jury in civil cases to those cases in which the amount in controversy exceeds \$10,000. The effect of the amendment is to increase the exclusive jurisdiction of the District Court.

November 16—The new District Court building in Annapolis opens. It is named the Robert F. Sweeney Building in honor of the first Chief Judge of the District Court.

EQUAL JUSTICE

We are committed to providing equal justice for all and to making the Court accessible to all.

2001 HIGHLIGHTS

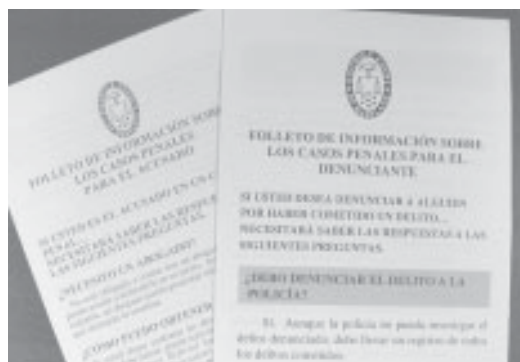
- The District Court is committed to providing qualified foreign language and sign language interpreters as needed in all cases to assure accessibility to the justice system. The Court also uses a telephone-based interpretation service, allowing access to interpreters for over 100 languages so individuals can communicate effectively with a commissioner or clerk at any time.
- The Court continued to improve public access to commissioners' stations, both by renovating existing locations and opening new stations. Renovations have created more space for individuals to participate in initial appearance hearings and removed unnecessary barriers between commissioners and those they serve.
- The Court created a new department—Administrative Services—under the Chief Clerk's office. The department will work to make the Court more accessible by focusing on legislative trends and updating forms as needed, providing information in a user-friendly manner, and addressing issues facing individuals with disabilities and those who speak a foreign language.
- A Customer Needs Assessment Workgroup was convened to look at ways to make facilities accessible. The Signage subcommittee is creating better signs to help citizens find their way to and within courthouses. The Public Space subcommittee is recommending guidelines to be used in developing new courthouse facilities, as well as recommending changes to current locations to provide adequate space for individuals to inspect records and meet with attorneys. A third subcommittee is designing a "Customer Satisfaction" survey to obtain ongoing feedback.
- The District Court opened a new building in Hagerstown (District 11) on November 21, 2000. The J. Louis Boubnitz Building, named after one of the first two judges to serve on the District Court in Hagerstown, is a modern and efficient building. It houses two courtrooms, the clerk's offices, and a commissioners' station.

AND ACCESSIBILITY

- The Court translated three more brochures into Spanish. Brochures available in both English and Spanish now include:
 - Filing a Criminal Complaint
 - What You Should Know as a Criminal Defendant
 - Filing Landlord-Tenant Cases
 - Obtaining a Peace Order
 - Obtaining a Protective Order
 - Filing a Small Claim
 - Wage Garnishments
 - Mediation: Is Going to Court Your Best Option?
- Citizens can learn about the District Court locations, procedures, and news by visiting the Maryland Judiciary website at www.courts.state.md.us.

2002 GOALS

- Offer automated Interactive Voice Response (IVR) information in Spanish as well as English over the telephone using an 800 number. The IVR system responds to an individual's need for information about traffic citations and trial dates, as well as providing directions to courthouses. The system also offers individuals the option to pay certain traffic citations over the phone with a credit card.
- Translate brochures into Korean, the third most commonly spoken language in Maryland, in addition to Spanish.



The District Court now offers eight of its brochures in Spanish. Plans are under way to translate materials into Korean as well.

1999

The legislature establishes peace orders to provide relief similar to that provided by protective orders in domestic violence cases. Peace orders provide protection from assault, false imprisonment, harassment, malicious destruction of property, stalking, and trespass. The District Court is given exclusive jurisdiction for peace orders.

2001

September 17—The Honorable Martha F. Rasin steps down as the Chief Judge of the District Court and returns to the bench.

September 18—Chief Judge Robert M. Bell appoints the Honorable James N. Vaughan, Administrative Judge in Howard and Carroll Counties, as the new Chief Judge of the District Court.

WE THANK THE HONORABLE



While the Honorable Martha F. Rasin presided over the events that helped the District Court celebrate its 30th Anniversary, we had no idea that this was to be the final year of her tenure as Chief Judge. The announcement that she wanted to return to the courtroom took the Court by surprise. Chief Judge Rasin led us through that transition with the same inspired leadership with which she approached the role of Chief Judge. Judge Rasin was only the second Chief Judge in the Court's history, succeeding the Honorable Robert F. Sweeney, who served in that capacity from the Court's creation in 1971 until 1996.

In her five years at the Court's helm, Chief Judge Rasin contributed in many ways to the District Court. Her primary focus was on improving services for individuals who find themselves with business before the Court. Here are just a few of her innumerable accomplishments:

The District Court for the first 25 years should have been known as the Sweeney Court. He started it, it had his personality. Under Judge Rasin, it became our Court.

The Honorable James N. Vaughan
Chief Judge,
District Court of Maryland

Time passes quickly. It seems like yesterday when you agreed to the unenviable task of taking over what Judge Sweeney developed and nurtured for 25 years. Many thought you would simply maintain the status quo until you "got your feet wet." They were wrong. You came in "running" and you never stopped. It was obvious that you spent each day thinking about how you could improve the Court and create a better work environment for its employees. You succeeded and all of us are grateful.

The Honorable Stephen L. Clagett
District Court of Maryland, Calvert County

Personnel

- Proposed legislation to move District Court employees into the Judicial Personnel System.
- Set educational minimums and increased compensation for commissioners to develop a more professional workforce.
- Oversaw comprehensive training of judges, commissioners, and clerks on the subjects of domestic violence and alternative dispute resolution.
- Furnished all judges with computers to improve research, writing, information and communication.
- Oversaw the passage of legislation that created law clerk positions for each district.

Staff from around the state enjoyed the steam train trip from Cumberland to Frostburg. This was one of four statewide events staged to celebrate the District Court's 30th Anniversary.



MARTHA F. RASIN

- Brought commissioners onto the Judiciary pay scale to make commissioners' compensation fair and attractive.

Courthouses and Facilities

- Developed standards for District Court commissioners' stations housed in local detention centers to assure judicial independence while cooperating with local government for efficiency.
- Embarked on long-range Facilities Master Planning for funding and construction.
- Changed standard District Court courthouse design to incorporate the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR), enhance security, house a commissioner presence, and make room for more ancillary services.

Court Operations

- Improved security by creating a centralized office of Court Security. Hired additional security staff where needed.
- Set standards for the use of videoconferencing technology for Initial Appearance Hearings or Bail Review Hearings to ensure that technology does not diminish the quality or promptness of judicial proceedings.
- Oversaw the development of an automated telephonic system to provide traffic case information 24 hours a day and to permit payment of tickets by phone.
- Improved commissioners' responsiveness to the public through standardization and use of after hours pager systems for on-call commissioners and by setting standard office hours in commissioners' stations in rural areas.

Systems Improvement

- Co-founded the Tri-Agency Committee to promote better communication among the Court, MVA, law enforcement, and the Office of Administrative Hearings in the development of systems for handling traffic-related matters.
- Initiated development of rules to permit domestic violence cases to be transferred between trial courts to better serve litigants.
- Oversaw development of legislation to permit District Court commissioners to issue protective orders to victims of abuse round-the-clock.
- Established a central office to develop, promote and support ADR.
- Initiated the use of staggered dockets, by which cases are scheduled for particular sessions throughout the day, instead of all at once, thus reducing congestion and public waiting time.

For five years, Judge Rasin led the District Court tirelessly, effectively and with vision.

The Honorable Robert F. Bell
Chief Judge, Court of Appeals
2002 State of the Judiciary Address



Former Chief Judge Martha Rasin speaks at the groundbreaking of a new courthouse in Baltimore.

You have, at all times, shown class, character, insight, restraint, and a commitment to the integrity and hard work which are hallmarks of the District Court. You are a most worthy successor to Bob Sweeney. You have made us all proud. We are in your debt...

The Honorable Dennis M. McHugh
District Court of Maryland,
Montgomery County

Administrative Judge

Keith E. Mathews

Administrative Clerk

Lonnie Ferguson

Admin. Commissioner

Jimmie Foxworth

382 employees,
including 26 judges

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Established a training rotation schedule to familiarize clerks with every type of case—civil, criminal, and traffic. This training will improve the service clerks provide to Court users.
- Continued the successful Drug Court program, from which more than 700 individuals have graduated since its inception in 1994. The project, which aims to break the cycle of drug addiction, is a network among the District Court, the State's Attorney, the Public Defender, and Parole & Probation. Defendants plead guilty and agree to pursue treatment and, in some cases, education as well as random urinalysis testing. Upon successful completion of the sentence imposed by the Court, the defendant is considered a graduate of Drug Court.
- Continued to operate its Gun Court, with 1,026 cases scheduled during the 2001 fiscal year. The special Firearms Investigations Violence Enforcement (F.I.V.E) Unit run by the State's Attorney's office assigns attorneys to prosecute all gun-related cases. The State's Attorney's office determines which cases to prosecute at the District, circuit and federal court levels. This court was established in an effort to reduce the number of homicides in Baltimore City.

- Identified more than 380 cases eligible for mediation, allowing the individuals involved in those cases to try to resolve their issues without going through a trial.
- Established several new specialized dockets (trial schedules), which help move cases through the courts more quickly. The first expedites preliminary hearings, during which a judge determines whether there is enough evidence to support criminal charges against the defendant. The district also established two dockets to decide criminal cases within 24 hours of the defendant's arrest. The district has had in place for several years a docket devoted exclusively to domestic violence cases.
- Moved Rent Court, during which judges hear disputes between landlords and tenants, from the District's North Avenue location to the Civil office on Fayette St. With the move, all civil cases are filed at a single location in the district.

GOALS

- Continue to enhance clerks' skills through training.
- Plan for the expansion of the Eastside location, at 1400 E. North Avenue.
- Prepare for the opening of the John R. Hargrove Sr. Courthouse in Brooklyn. The new facility, due to open in early 2003, will have five courtrooms, and will handle criminal and traffic cases from the southern, southwest, and central districts of Baltimore. The new courthouse will alleviate overcrowding in the Baltimore City locations and make dockets more manageable.



District 1 has devoted a great deal of time to training this year, to ensure that court staff have the skills to provide excellent service.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Implemented a civil mediation project in Wicomico County to assist the public and move civil cases through the system in an expeditious manner.
- Established Court schedules with staggered start times for payable traffic offenses in Somerset and Wicomico Counties to reduce waiting time for the public.
- Hired staff to specialize in domestic violence cases in Wicomico County.
- Obtained an X-ray machine to augment the metal detector operation in Wicomico County, enhancing public safety and security.



District 2 is one of several districts that enhanced security during the past year.

GOALS

- Establish uniformity in procedures among the District's different locations to eliminate any differences that exist due to local practices.
- Cross-train all clerks, an especially important goal in the District's smaller courthouses, where there is limited staffing.
- Complete the renovation of a third courtroom in Wicomico County.
- Expand cross-training program for clerical staff.
- Establish a full-time commissioner position in Ocean City.

district
two

**Dorchester, Somerset,
Wicomico, & Worcester**

Administrative Judge

John L. Norton, III

Administrative Clerk

Mary E. Kinnamon

Admin. Commissioner

M. Carol Hauser-Haynes

62 employees,

including five judges

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Implemented an accelerated docket in Cecil County to expedite hearings for incarcerated defendants charged in minor criminal cases. In the first five months, 69 defendants had their cases heard, saving the county \$87,731.20 in expenses.

- Scheduled hearings and trials at staggered start times to reduce the time spent waiting for cases to be heard.

GOALS

- Acquire space in Cecil County to provide commissioner services in outlying areas. Locations such as Port Deposit and Cecilton/Warwick would have a commissioner on duty one day a month for the purpose of accepting applications for criminal charges.
- Obtain a full-time commissioner position to sit in Kent County on a permanent day shift. This would provide citizens with the services of a commissioner during normal business hours without having to make an appointment with an on-call commissioner.

district
three

**Caroline, Cecil, Kent,
Queen Anne's, & Talbot**

Administrative Judge

James C. McKinney

Administrative Clerk

Grace D. Achuff

Admin. Commissioner

Dianne Russell

69 staff members,
including 6 judges

district four

Calvert, Charles,
and St. Mary's

Administrative Judge
Stephen L. Clagett

Administrative Clerk
Richard A. Parker

Admin. Commissioner
Michael J. Elmore

63 employees,
including 4 judges

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Improved security in the Calvert and St. Mary's courthouses by installing metal detectors and hiring additional bailiffs.
- Instituted the Charles County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, under the leadership of Judge Richard A. Cooper, the Council's founder and chair.
- Created a districtwide civil committee to ensure consistency in civil procedures throughout the District.
- Formed a committee to plan team-building and social events for staff. The committee's work increases morale and retention, ensuring quality staff to provide service to the public.

GOALS

- Begin hearing cases in the Calvert County courthouse's second courtroom.
- Redesign the workspace at the Charles County courthouse to promote increased efficiency and opportunities for staff to work together more easily.
- Renovate the courthouse in St. Mary's County, both to create a new courtroom and to make the cashier's office more accessible to the public.
- Work toward uniformity in traffic, criminal, and civil procedures throughout the District.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Consolidated two commissioners' offices with the opening of an office in the new Eastover Regional Booking Facility. The new commissioners' station will provide 24-hour coverage to southern Prince George's County.
- Reduced landlord-tenant case processing from 21 days to just 5.
- Cut by two-thirds the amount of time it takes to process drug cases, from 90 days to 30.
- Served as the pilot location for the Court's Domestic Violence Courtroom program, which allows courtroom clerks to enter case and trial information in domestic violence cases by computer, rather than manually.

GOALS

- Open the final Regional Booking Facility, in Upper Marlboro, further consolidating the functions of the Court.
- Renovate the clerk's office to provide an area for processing domestic violence cases. The new space will give citizens privacy and a comfortable setting to complete their requests for assistance.



Prince George's County recently opened a new commissioners' station in the Eastover Regional Booking Facility.

district five

Prince George's

Administrative Judge
Frank M. Kratovil

Administrative Clerk
Violet O. Owens

Admin. Commissioner
Derrick Wooten

212 employees,
including 13 judges

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Kept dockets current despite struggling with two judicial vacancies and vacancies in the clerk's office.
- Worked with many stakeholders to coordinate the March 1, 2002 transfer of the Juvenile Division from the District Court to the Montgomery County circuit court.
- Began to plan the new facility that has been approved for Silver Spring. The Court has outgrown the Georgia Avenue satellite facility in Silver Spring. This new location will be the first newly constructed facility for the District Court in Montgomery County.
- Began preliminary planning for a new Rockville District Court. Like the new Silver Spring facility, this Court will be housed in a multi-service center. The facility will be constructed on the current site of the Rockville library.
- Moved the domestic violence cases to a larger courtroom to accommodate a growing caseload and the increased number of litigants and witnesses.
- Continued to smoothly operate Landlord-Tenant Court with the revamped procedures put in place by Administrative Judge Cornelius Vaughey several years ago. While the number of landlord-tenant cases has increased, staffing remains the same.

GOALS

- Renovate the commissioners' station at the Central Processing Unit, a project to which the county is also very committed.
- Prepare for the transition to the new County Correctional Facility, which opens in 2002.
- Complete the Juvenile Division transfer to the circuit court.
- Continue to work with architects and planners on the new Silver Spring courthouse. While plans for a new Rockville courthouse have been delayed, the District will continue to work on this new facility as well.
- Restructure the courtroom line-ups—the schedule that dictates which cases will be heard in which courtrooms—to assist the public and staff.

Administrative Judge
Cornelius J. Vaughey

Administrative Clerk
Jeffrey L. Ward

Admin. Commissioner
Charles Peters

166 employees,
including 13 judges



An artist's rendering of the new Silver Spring courthouse, scheduled to open in 2003.

Administrative Judge
James W. Dryden

Administrative Clerk
Rebecca A. Hoppa

Admin. Commissioner
Diane Ebbert

113 employees,
including 8 judges

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Prepared an Advice of Rights video in English and Spanish to be played at the Detention Center for persons scheduled for Bail Review. Each defendant signs a form acknowledging that they saw the video, which helps to expedite the Bail Review process.
- Hosted more than 100 students from North Arundel High School to introduce them to the consequences of drinking and driving. Judge Vincent A. Mulieri presided over an actual drunk driving case, after which the students discussed this pressing issue with a variety of presenters.
- Implemented two Civil Mediation programs. The first is a day-of-trial program that allows parties in Small Claims cases to have their cases mediated on the day of their trial. The second is a pre-trial mediation program, in which parties in Small Claims cases are notified prior to trial that mediation is available, with an explanation of the process.
- Completed the furnishing of a training room in the Annapolis location to include PCs and a podium. The room will be used for hands-on training of new clerks on the PC and is available for group training workshops and meetings.
- Provided additional security in the Glen Burnie location by adding an x-ray machine to the existing metal detectors. The district also received additional bailiff positions to enhance security in courtrooms, as well as a “response” bailiff who patrols between courtrooms, judges’ chambers, hallways, and the lobby in both locations.
- Served as a pilot location for the new CourtSmart digital recording system.

GOALS

- Renovate the counter area in Glen Burnie to accommodate a public access computer and make the area more accessible to the public.
- Implement an early screening process of criminal cases by the State’s Attorneys Office. The process would take place within a few days of the filing of charges with the commissioner.



The District Courthouse in Annapolis is named in honor of the Court’s first Chief Judge, Robert F. Sweeney.

Administrative Judge
Michael L. McCampbell

Administrative Clerk
Michael P. Vach

Admin. Commissioner
Joel Snyder

207 employees,
including 13 judges

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Created a Criminal Court Diversion Program, which allows individuals charged with some minor offenses to perform community service in exchange for a stet or nol pros, under certain conditions.
- Instituted, in conjunction with the State's Attorney's Office, a "Civilian Complaint Review Board" process, designed to ensure that viable, prosecutable criminal cases are brought to trial and that civilians filing criminal charges are completely involved in the process.
- Restructured the dockets to improve the efficiency of cases moving through the system. For example, at the Court's Towson location, criminal cases are heard Mondays and Tuesdays, while civil, traffic and domestic violence cases are heard during the remaining three days. Cases that last longer than expected can easily be carried over into the next day.
- Made a fundamental change in the handling of Pre-Trial Conferences by using a retired judge from the district, thereby allowing the sitting judge who would otherwise facilitate the conferences to remain on the bench with a docket.
- Alleviated major backlogs in the civil division.
- Completed long-term major organizational restructuring that improved internal communication and efficiency.

GOALS

- Create a centralized mail section.
- Renovate a 7,000 square foot space to accommodate records, the constables' office, accounting staff, and a new public access area.
- Continue to do long-term planning and modify existing procedures to achieve greater efficiency and better serve the public.



Restructured dockets in District 8 have improved the efficiency of cases moving through the court system.

Administrative Judge

Victor K. Butanis

Administrative Clerk

Joseph Rosenthal

Admin. Commissioner

Anthony Weddle

43 employees,
including 4 judges

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Approved plans for renovations to the clerks office. The renovations will increase the work area to accommodate more staff as well as provide for more efficient use of existing space.
- Increased the number of clerks in the civil department, enhancing the Court's ability to offer prompt, quality service to the public.
- Enhanced collaboration with related agencies, allowing for greater coordination of services. District staff held informal meetings with the Bar Association, police, and other related agencies and advocacy groups.

GOALS

- Cross-train all clerks, including courtroom clerks. Staff will become familiar with the work of each section, which will help the Court keep all work current.
- Train an additional five employees to work as courtroom clerks, bringing the total number of individuals trained as courtroom clerks to 10.
- Initiate the Alternative Dispute Resolution program in Harford County.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Served as the pilot location for several of the Court's programs, including:
 - automation in the courtroom;
 - the introduction of red-light camera citations in the state and implementing the procedures and dockets to handle the new citations; and,
 - the introduction of staggered trial dockets. The dockets held at 9, 10, 11:00 a.m. and 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 p.m. have enabled the Court to serve the public more expediently.
- Held the official ground breaking ceremony for the District's new building in Carroll County on April 17, 2001. The Court will move into the new building in August 2002.

- Completed renovations of the Howard County courthouse, which included the addition of another courtroom.
- Opened two new satellite commissioners' stations, one in each county.

GOALS

- Continue to provide the citizens of Howard and Carroll counties with excellent service.
- Implement an Alternative Dispute Resolution program in Howard County.



Howard County was one of the first courthouses to use staggered dockets, reducing waiting time for court users.

Administrative Judge
JoAnn Ellinghaus-Jones

Administrative Clerk
Nancy E. Mueller

Admin. Commissioner
Heather Bader

84 employees,
including 7 judges

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Completed the move to a new courthouse, which opened in downtown Hagerstown in November, 2000.
- Implemented a new system of staggered dockets to accommodate citizens and make the best use of available courtrooms.
- Started an Alternative Dispute Resolution/Mediation program to allow parties to resolve disputes without trials.
- Started regular meetings of the Administrative Clerk, County Clerks and Supervisors to ensure uniformity of policies and procedures throughout the district.
- Completed renovations in Frederick to ensure better security in the judge's chamber area.
- Hosted an "open house" in Washington County on Law Day and gave tours of the building to personnel of many of the law offices in town.
- Added a much needed phone in the lobby of the commissioners' station to allow customers to check in upon arrival.

Administrative Judge
W. Milnor Roberts

Administrative Clerk
Dixie L. Scholtes

Admin. Commissioner
Judy Drake

63 employees,
including 5 judges

GOALS

- Improve accessibility and service to the public at the commissioners' stations.
- Plan more outreach activities, to increase the public's awareness of the District Court's role in the community.
- Continue to meet with other agencies to improve understanding of and cooperation with our Caseflow Management Project.
- Create positions for specialized domestic violence clerks in Frederick and Hagerstown.
- Cross-train clerks to work in the courtroom.
- Continue to improve commissioners' station in Frederick by adding signs, relocating one of the offices, and separating detention activities from the interview area.



The District Court's new Hagerstown location

Administrative Judge
Paul J. Stakem

Administrative Clerk
Kathleen M. Stafford

Admin. Commissioner
Annetta Lamonica

32 employees,
including three judges

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Implemented a pilot program in April 2001, in which a District Court commissioner goes to the Grantsville town office every Wednesday from noon until 4 pm to accept applications for criminal charges.
- Received funding in Allegany County for a clerk to work solely on domestic violence cases.

GOALS

- Obtain funding for a domestic violence clerk in Garrett County.
- Prepare to move to a new location in Allegany County.

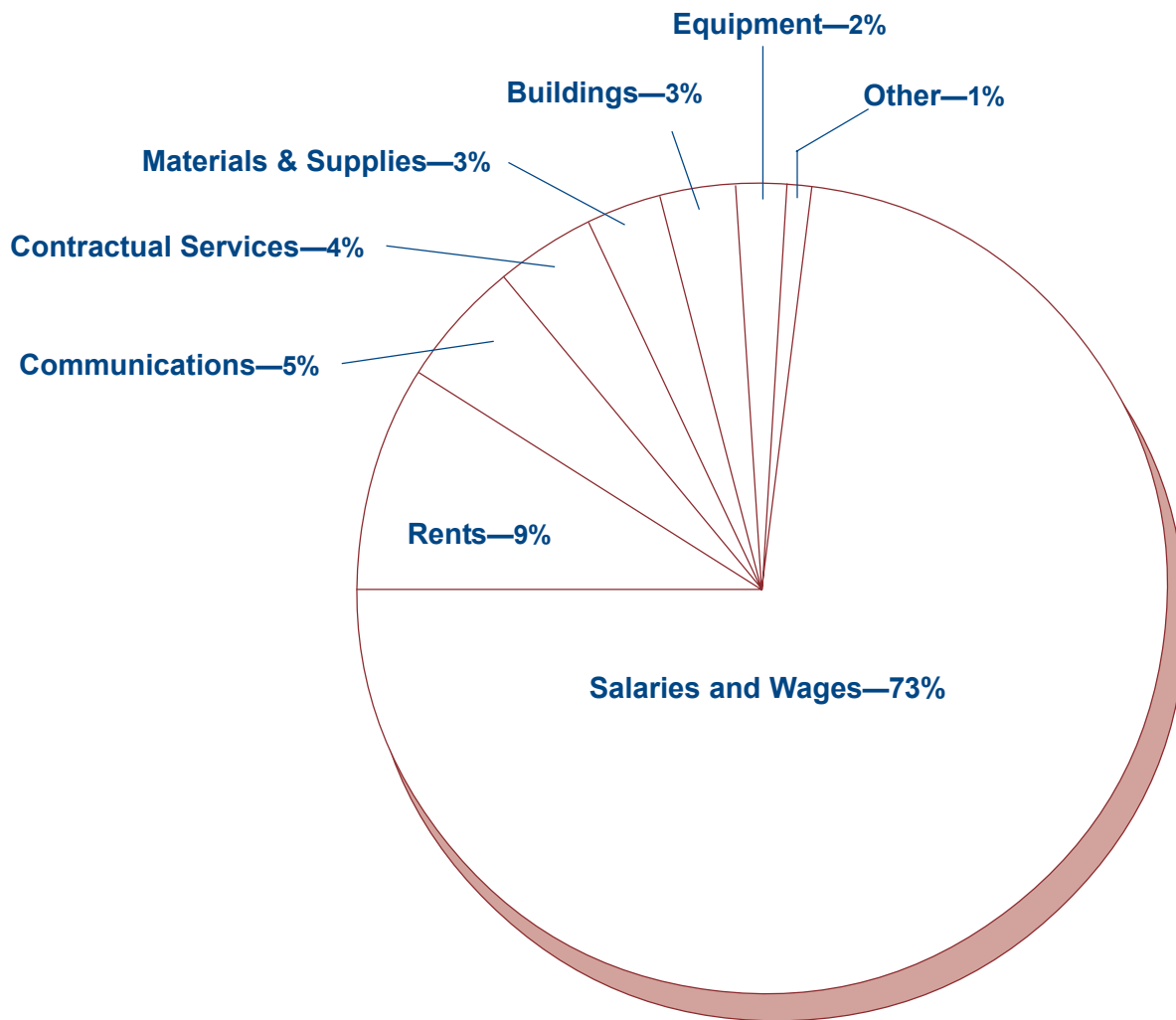
FISCAL YEAR 2001 STATISTICAL PROFILE

TYPE OF CASE	NUMBER OF CASES
Motor Vehicle	
Driving While Intoxicated	35,962
Other Jailable Offenses	79,984
Payable Offenses	948,918
Total Motor Vehicle	1,064,864
Civil	
Landlord/Tenant	525,781
Contract & Tort	198,814
Domestic Violence Protective Orders	18,829
Peace Orders	7,085
Other Special Proceedings	136,179
Total Civil	886,688
Criminal	183,812
Total Cases Received from June 2000 to July 2001	2,135,364

DISTRICT COURT CASELOADS & JUDICIAL POSITIONS

	1972	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997	2001
Motor Vehicle	438,793	672,516	636,427	837,370	1,031,252	962,322	1,064,864
Civil	227,002	371,336	509,254	612,700	790,796	828,307	886,688
Criminal	112,923	156,199	135,447	143,176	177,274	189,708	183,812
TOTAL CASES	778,718	1,200,051	1,281,128	1,593,246	1,999,322	1,980,337	2,135,364
Judges	79	83	86	90	97	99	108

FISCAL YEAR 2001 FINANCIAL PROFILE



Salary and Wages	\$70,451,606
Rents	\$8,567,355
Communications	\$4,367,807
Contractual Services	\$3,866,434
Material and Supplies	\$2,525,141
Buildings	\$2,394,520
Equipment	\$1,710,855
Other	\$1,145,899
Total	\$95,029,617

**THE DISTRICT COURT OF MARYLAND
MARYLAND JUDICIAL CENTER
580 TAYLOR AVENUE, A-3
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401
410-260-1225**

James N. Vaughan, Chief Judge
Patricia H. Platt, Chief Clerk
Rick Clemens, Asst. Chief Clerk, Finance
Charles Moulden, Asst. Chief Clerk, Operations
Diane Pawlowicz, Asst. Chief Clerk, Administrative Services
Lisa Ritter, Asst. Chief Clerk, Engineering and Central Services
David W. Weissert, Coordinator of Commissioner Activity

Thanks to the Administrative Judges, Clerks, and Commissioners who devoted their time and energy to this project.

Diane Pawlowicz and Christine Scheef, **Editors**
Christine Scheef, **Design**
Cindy Spieth, **Cover Design**

Photographs

Photo of Chief Judge Robert M. Bell, p. 3, supplied by the Maryland Manual Online, published by the Maryland State Archives. Artist's rendering of Silver Spring courthouse, p. 23, provided by the Department of General Services. Photos of Dorchester County courthouse, inside cover; Kent County courthouse, p. 7; Anne Arundel County Courthouse (Annapolis), p. 25; and Washington County courthouse, p. 27, by Tracey Brown Photography.